

BIRTH CONTROL



State legislatures in U.S. poised to act on abortion rights

People attend the Women's March ATX rally, Saturday, Oct. 2, 2021, at the Texas State Capitol in Austin, Texas.

Associated Press
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State legislatures in U.S. poised to act on abortion rights

From Front

By WILSON RING
Associated Press

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — Early in the new year, the Vermont House of Representatives is due to begin debate on an amendment that would enshrine the right to abortion in the state constitution and send the question to voters in the fall. Because the process began two years ago, it's a coincidence that Vermont lawmakers will be considering the Reproductive Liberty Amendment while the U.S. Supreme Court is considering a case that could severely erode a right that has stood for half a century. The pending decision in that case, expected in mid-2022, means it's not just Vermont with abortion on the legislative agenda. State legislatures across the country will be responding to the possibility of seismic change to the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling that legalized abortion across the U.S. Republican-led legislatures are ready to further restrict or ban abortions outright while Democratic-led ones are seeking to ensure access to abortion in their state law.

Supporters of the proposed Vermont amendment had the possible loss of *Roe* in mind when they began the process in 2019 to enshrine "reproductive autonomy," including abortion, in the constitution.

"In my mind, there should be no question where Vermont stands with regard to its core values and fundamental rights," said Democratic state Rep. Ann Pugh, who chairs the committee that will hold hearings on the proposal as early as January. "And for those rights and responsibilities and values to be protect-



Anti-abortion protesters demonstrate in front of the U.S. Supreme Court Wednesday, Dec. 1, 2021, in Washington, as the court hears arguments in a case from Mississippi, where a 2018 law would ban abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy, well before viability.

Associated Press

ed more definitively, they need to be enshrined in our state constitution."

A far different approach is being considered in Kansas. Republican state lawmakers have placed on the state's August 2022 primary ballot a proposed constitutional amendment that would overturn a 2019 state Supreme Court decision. That ruling declared abortion access a "fundamental right" and part of a woman's inherent right to bodily autonomy.

The amendment would say that the state constitution provides no right to abortion and that the Legislature can regulate it however lawmakers see fit — which means if *Roe v. Wade* is overturned, Kansas lawmakers could ban abortion completely.

In California, lawmakers are expected to consider a plan in the coming year to make the state a "sanctuary" for those seeking reproductive care. That could

include paying for travel, lodging and procedures for people from other states where abortions have been restricted or perhaps outlawed.

"Abortion has always been contentious," said Mary Hahn Beerworth, of the Vermont Right to Life Committee, which is opposing Vermont's abortion-rights amendment. "In every state legislature across the country, in every political election, abortion rises to the top. It's one of the most identifying issues of our time."

At least 20 states, mostly across the South and Midwest, already have laws that would severely restrict or ban abortion if the high court overturns *Roe* and leaves the issue up to the states, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a reproductive rights think tank. Earlier this year, Republican lawmakers in at least half a dozen states said they planned to introduce

legislation modeled after a new Texas law that effectively bans abortion about six weeks after conception. The law is written in a way that is intended to circumvent the federal courts by leaving enforcement up to individuals rather than the state. They hope it provides a pathway to enacting the kind of abortion crackdown they have sought for years.

In Mississippi, Republican state Sen. Chris McDaniel said earlier this year he would "absolutely" consider filing legislation to match the Texas law after a sharply divided U.S. Supreme Court let that law stand, at least for now.

"I think most conservative states in the South will look at this inaction by the court and will see that as perhaps a chance to move on that issue," he said.

More than a dozen states, plus the District of Columbia, have statutory protections in place for abortion

rights, said Elizabeth Nash, a state policy analyst with the Guttmacher Institute. That includes Massachusetts, where the Democrats who control the legislature earlier this year approved a bill over the veto of Republican Gov. Charlie Baker codifying abortion rights into state law.

Yet even in California, which already has adopted several measures to protect abortion access, a pro-choice group laid out 45 steps that could be taken to further protect those rights.

"There is a lot of work to be done in order to shore up abortion rights and access," Nash said.

Efforts to further restrict access are not just coming from more traditionally conservative parts of the country. The state budget New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu, a Republican, signed in June contains a provision prohibiting abortion after 24 weeks of gestation, with exceptions for the mother's life or physical health. It takes effect Jan. 1, just before the start of the new legislation session.

And Republican lawmakers, who control New Hampshire's legislature, are drafting several abortion-related bills, including one that would prohibit the procedure after the detection of a fetal heartbeat. Another would allow the biological father of an unborn child to seek a court order prohibiting a woman from having an abortion. A third would repeal the prohibition against remaining on a sidewalk adjacent to an abortion clinic.

Nash said a handful of states have interpreted their state constitutions as protecting abortion rights, but Democrats in Vermont want to be certain. □

White House, Jan. 6 committee agree to shield some documents

By ZEKE MILLER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol has agreed to defer its attempt to get hundreds of pages of records from the Trump administration, holding off at the request of the Biden White House.

The deferral is in response to concerns by the Biden White House that releasing all the Trump administration documents sought by the committee could compromise national security and executive privilege.

President Joe Biden has repeatedly rejected former President Donald Trump's blanket efforts to cite executive privilege to block the release of documents surrounding that day. But Biden's White House is still working with the committee to shield some documents from being turned over.

Trump is appealing to the Supreme Court to try to block the National Archives and Records Administration, which maintains custody of the documents from his time in office, from giving them to the committee.

The agreement to keep some Trump-era records away from the committee is memorialized in a Dec. 16 letter from the White House counsel's office. It mostly shields records that do not involve the events of Jan. 6 but were covered by the committee's sweeping request for documents from the Trump White House about the events of that day.

Dozens of pages created Jan. 6 don't pertain to the assault on the Capitol. Other documents involve sensitive preparations and deliberations by the National Security Council. Biden's officials were worried that if those pages were turned over to Congress, that would set a troublesome precedent for the executive branch, no matter who is president.

Still other documents are highly classified and the White House asked Con-



Violent insurrectionists loyal to then President Donald Trump climb the west wall of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Jan. 6, 2021.

Associated Press

gress to work with the federal agencies that created them to discuss their release.

"The documents for which the Select Committee has agreed to withdraw or defer its request do not appear to bear on the White House's preparations for or response to the events of January 6, or on efforts to overturn the election or otherwise obstruct the peaceful transfer of power," White House deputy counsel Jonathan Su wrote in one of two letters to the committee obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press.

For the last several months the National Archives has been transmitting tranches of documents to the White House and to lawyers for Trump to determine whether they contain any privileged information. Trump has raised both broad objections to the release of the documents as well as specific concerns about particular documents.

The National Archives has said that the records Trump wants to block include presidential diaries, visitor logs, speech drafts, handwritten notes "concerning the events of January 6" from the files of former chief of staff Mark Meadows, and "a draft Executive Order on the topic of election integrity."

Biden has repeatedly rejected Trump's claims of executive privilege over those documents, including in a letter sent Dec. 23 regarding about 20 pages of documents.

"The President has determined that an assertion of executive privilege is not in the best interests of the United States, and therefore is not justified," White House counsel Dana Remus reiterated in the latest letter.

Trump has taken to the courts to block the document releases. A federal appeals court ruled this month against Trump, and he has filed an appeal to the Supreme Court, though the high court has yet to decide whether to take up the case. □



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Police: 5 killed, including gunman, in Denver area shootings

By COLLEEN SLEVIN

Associated Press

DENVER (AP)—Police were investigating Tuesday after a gunman went on a shooting rampage through several business districts in the Denver area, killing four people and wounding three others, including an officer as police pursued him.

The suspect also died Monday night after exchanging gunfire with officers in a shopping district in the Denver suburb of Lakewood, police said.

Police said they were still investigating what led to the shootings, which mostly happened in commercial areas.

"We need to dig in and find out what the motive was behind this," Denver Police Chief Paul Pazen said at a news conference.

The shootings started shortly after 5 p.m. in central Denver along Broadway, a busy street lined by shops, bars and restaurants, where two women were killed and a man was injured, Pazen said. On Tuesday, candles and flower bouquets rested in the doorway of a nearby tattoo shop.

A short time later, a man was fatally shot in another



A customer walks away from the closed entrance to an Xfinity store Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2021 in Lakewood, Colo., one of the scenes in a shooting spree that left five people dead—including the suspected shooter Monday evening—and left three more wounded.

Associated Press

location, Pazen said. Gunshots were also fired along another busy street near Denver Health hospital, but no one was injured, he said. Later, Denver police chased the vehicle believed to have been involved in the shootings and exchanged gunfire with the person inside, but the suspect was able to get away after "disabling" the police car, Pazen said. The suspect then fled into Lakewood, Pazen said.

Just before 6 p.m., the Lakewood Police Department received a report of shots fired at a business in Lakewood, said John Romero, a spokesman for that department. A gunshot victim was later found and pronounced dead at the scene, Romero said.

When officers found the car suspected of being involved in the Belmar shop-

ping area, the suspect opened fire and officers shot back. The suspect ran away and allegedly threatened someone in a business with a gun before going into a Hyatt hotel and shooting a clerk, who was taken to the hospital, Romero said. The hotel clerk's condition was not known.

The gunman then fled on foot to a Hyatt hotel, where he is believed to have shot

a clerk. He also shot and wounded a Lakewood police officer after he left the hotel, Romero said.

The wounded officer was undergoing surgery Monday night and his condition was not immediately known.

After the officer was wounded, police and the suspect exchanged fire and the suspect died, Romero said. It was not immediately clear if police officers had shot him.

"This one individual was responsible for this very violent crime spree that took place this evening," Pazen said.

On Tuesday, in Lakewood's Belmar shopping district, where shops line sidewalks in a modern version of a downtown, plywood covered some of the windows of a wood-fired pizza restaurant where workers were cleaning up inside. Investigators also were checking the aluminum window frame of a store for bullet holes.

Nearby on the street, which was decorated with large, silver holiday ornaments, sat an older two-door Honda Civic with a bullet through the hood and a flat front tire. □

Flu is making a comeback in U.S. after an unusual year off



Registered nurse Megan Chamberlain gives a flu shot to Anthony Devitt, of Marlboro, Vt., during a flu vaccine clinic on Route 9, in Brattleboro, Vt., that was hosted by Visiting Nurse and Hospice for Vermont and New Hampshire on Tuesday, Oct. 26, 2021.

Associated Press

By CARLA K. JOHNSON
AP Medical Writer

The U.S. flu season has arrived on schedule after taking a year off, with flu hos-

pitalizations rising and two child deaths reported. Last year's flu season was the lowest on record, likely because COVID-19 mea-

sures — school closures, distancing, masks and canceled travel — prevented the spread of influenza, or because the coronavirus somehow pushed aside other viruses.

"This is setting itself up to be more of a normal flu season," said Lynnette Brammer, who tracks flu-like illnesses for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The childhood deaths, Brammer said, are "unfortunately what we would expect when flu activity picks up. It's a sad reminder of how severe flu can be." During last year's unusually light flu season, one child died. In contrast, 199 children died from flu two years ago, and 144 the year before that.

In the newest data, the

most intense flu activity was in the nation's capital, Washington, D.C., and the number of states with high flu activity rose from three to seven.

In CDC figures released Monday, states with high flu activity are New Mexico, Kansas, Indiana, New Jersey, Tennessee, Georgia and North Dakota.

The type of virus circulating this year tends to cause the largest amount of severe disease, especially in the elderly and the very young, Brammer said.

Last year's break from the flu made it more challenging to plan for this year's flu vaccine. So far, it looks like what's circulating is in a slightly different subgroup from what the vaccine targets, but it's "really too early to know" whether that

will blunt the vaccine's effectiveness, Brammer said. "We'll have to see what the impact of these little changes" will be, Brammer said. "Flu vaccine is your best way to protect yourself against flu."

There are early signs that fewer people are getting flu shots compared with last year.

With hospitals already stretched by COVID-19, it's more important than ever to get a flu shot and take other precautions, Brammer said.

"Cover your cough. Wash your hands. Stay home if you're sick," Brammer said. "If you do get flu, there are antivirals you can talk to your doctor about that can prevent severe illness and help you stay out of the hospital." □

Save the Children staff confirmed dead in Myanmar massacre

BANGKOK (AP) — The humanitarian group Save the Children said Tuesday it has confirmed that two of its staff were among at least 35 people, including children, who were killed in eastern Myanmar on Christmas Eve in an attack it blamed on the country's military.

It said the two staff members were caught up in the attack in Kayah state as they were traveling back to their office after conducting humanitarian activities in a nearby community.

"Violence against innocent civilians including aid workers is intolerable, and this senseless attack is a breach of International Humanitarian Law," the group's chief executive, Inger Ashing, said in a statement.

"This is not an isolated event. The people of Myanmar continue to be targeted with increasing violence and these events demand an immediate response," Ashing said.

The army seized power in February, ousting the elected government and arresting top officials. Its action was met by non-violent nationwide dem-



In this photo provided by the Karen Nationalities Defense Force (KNDF), vehicles smolder in Hpruso township, Kayah state, Myanmar, Friday, Dec. 24, 2021.

Associated Press

onstrations, which security forces quashed with deadly force, killing nearly 1,400 civilians, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

Peaceful protests have continued, but an armed resistance has also grown amid the severe crackdown, to the point that U.N. experts have warned

the country could be sliding into civil war.

Save the Children called on the U.N. Security Council to respond to the army violence with steps including an arms embargo. It also urged the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to press for the implementation of an agreement reached in April with Myan-

mar's leader calling for the cessation of violence in the country and mediation by an ASEAN special envoy. Photos of the attack have spread on social media in Myanmar, fueling outrage against the military. The photos show the charred bodies of over 30 people in three burned-out vehicles who were report-

edly shot by government troops as they were fleeing combat.

On Sunday, the U.S. Embassy in Myanmar said it was appalled by the "barbaric attack in Kayah state that killed at least 35 civilians, including women and children."

"We will continue to press for accountability for the perpetrators of the ongoing campaign of violence against the people of Burma," it said, using Myanmar's previous name.

A villager who said he went to the scene told The Associated Press that the victims had fled the fighting between armed resistance groups and Myanmar's army near Koi Ngan village, which is just beside Mo So, on Friday.

A report in the state-run Myanma Alinn newspaper on Saturday said the fighting near Mo So broke out on Friday when members of ethnic guerrilla forces, known as the Karen National Progressive Party, and those opposed to the military drove in "suspicious" vehicles and attacked security forces after refusing to stop. □

Yemen rebels allow U.N. flights temporarily into Sanaa airport

By SAMY MAGDY
Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The Iran-backed rebels in Yemen said Tuesday they are temporarily allowing U.N. humanitarian flights to land at the airport in the capital, Sanaa, following a week-long halt in flights into the northern, rebel-held territory.

The rebel Houthis, who control Sanaa and much of Yemen's north, had barred U.N. and other humanitarian flights from landing at the airport amid heavy airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition on the capital and Houthis' cross-border missile and drone attacks on the kingdom.

At the time, the U.N. food program said the Houthis claimed the airport had become "unserviceable due to technical issue."

The rebels accused the Saudi-led coalition of blocking the arrival of new air traffic control equipment. The coalition has

been fighting to restore Yemen's internationally recognized government to power and maintains an air, land and sea blockade

of Sanaa and the north.

The Sanaa airport "is ready to receive flights" from the U.N. and other international humanitarian agencies, the Houthis said Tuesday. They also urged the United Nations to help facilitate the arrival of the air control equipment from Djibouti. Yemen's war erupted in 2014, when the Houthis seized Sana and forced the government into exile in Saudi Arabia. The coalition entered the conflict in March 2015.

The U.N. envoy to Yemen, Hans Grundberg, denounced the latest uptick in fighting in Yemen, particularly the continued Houthi offensive on the government-held city of Marib.

"The escalation in recent weeks is among the worst we have seen in Yemen for years and the threat to ci-



A Yemeni man who was severely injured when a ballistic missile and an explosive-laden drone fired by Yemen's Houthi rebels hit a fuel station in the Rawdha neighborhood of Marib, Yemen, receives treatment at a hospital in Marib, on June 21, 2021.

Associated Press

vilian lives is increasing," he said.

Grundberg also voiced concerns over deadly coalition airstrikes on Sanaa and the Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia, and urged the warring sides to engage with U.N. efforts to de-escalate the violence, address urgent humanitarian needs and launch a political process to end the conflict.

Also Tuesday, two U.N. agencies revealed that the Houthis arrested two of their employees in Sanaa in early November. UNESCO and the U.N. human rights office said no legal grounds were given for their detention. Both agencies expressed concern for their employees' well-being and called for their immediate release. A Houthi spokesman did not answer phone calls seeking comment. □

Israeli PM says not opposed to 'good' nuclear deal with Iran

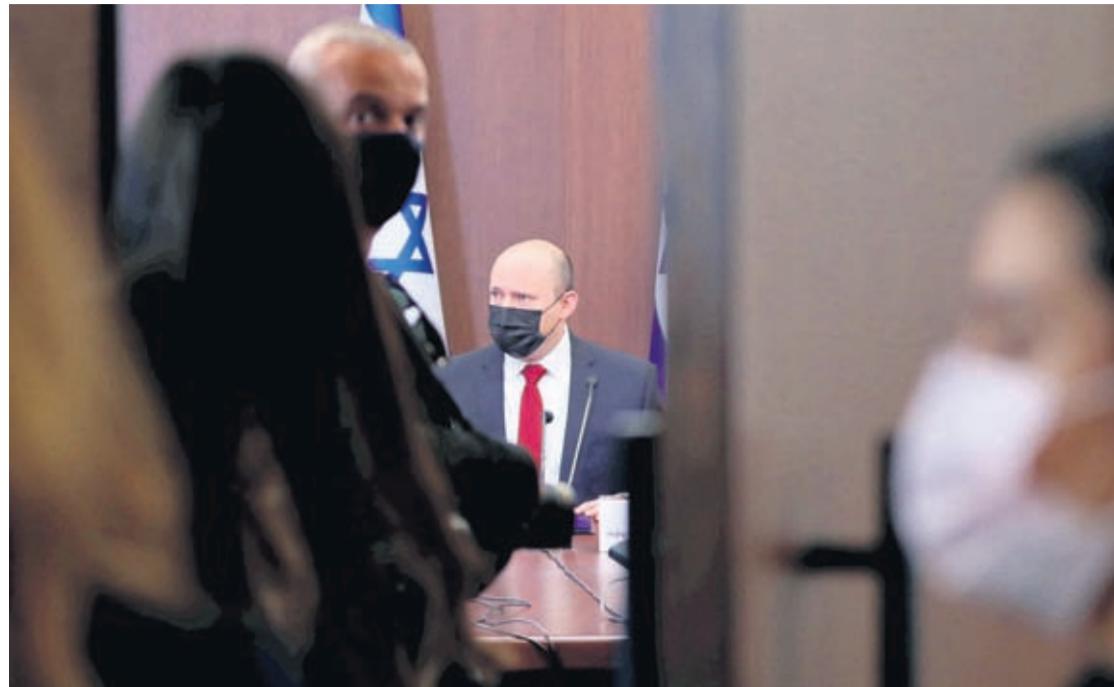
By TIA GOLDENBERG

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said Tuesday he is not opposed to a "good" nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, but voiced skepticism that such an outcome would emerge from the current negotiations.

Bennett spoke a day after negotiators from Iran and five world powers resumed talks in Vienna on restoring Tehran's tattered 2015 nuclear deal. He reiterated that Israel was not bound by any accord, leaving it room to maneuver militarily. "At the end of the day, of course there can be a good deal," Bennett told Israeli Army Radio. "Is that, at the moment, under the current dynamic, expected to happen? No, because a much harder stance is needed." Meanwhile, negotiators from the three western European countries negotiating with Iran to revive the nuclear deal said they're not setting any "artificial deadline" for an agreement but stressed anew that there are "weeks, not months" in which to reach one.

Bennett also denied claims



Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, rear and wearing a face mask, attends during a cabinet meeting at the prime minister's office in Jerusalem, Israel, Sunday, Dec. 19, 2021.

Associated Press

by former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he had agreed to a policy of "no surprises" with Washington, meaning that it would be frank about its military intentions regarding Iran with its prime ally and thus be potentially hobbled. "Israel will always maintain its right to act and will defend itself by itself," he said. Israel has watched with concern as European nations, Russia and China have restarted talks with Iran in recent weeks. Tehran

has taken a hard stance in the negotiations, suggesting everything discussed in previous rounds of diplomacy could be renegotiated and demanding sanctions relief even as it ramps up its nuclear program. Bennett has urged negotiators to tow a firmer line against Iran. Israel is not a party to the talks but has engaged in a blitz of diplomacy on the sidelines in an attempt to sway allies to put more pressure on Iran to rein in its nuclear program.

In Tehran, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian told state TV that a "quick and proper agreement in the near future" is possible if the other parties to the negotiations demonstrate "seriousness alongside goodwill." Tehran's landmark 2015 accord granted Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. But in 2018, then-President Donald Trump withdrew America from the deal and imposed sweeping sanc-

tions on Iran. The other signatories have struggled to keep the agreement alive. The latest round of talks in Vienna, the eighth, opened Monday, 10 days after negotiations were adjourned for the Iranian negotiator to return home for consultations. The previous round, the first after a more than five-month gap caused by the arrival of a new hard-line government in Iran, was marked by tensions over new Iranian demands. Iran says its nuclear activities are for peaceful purposes. Israel considers Iran to be its greatest enemy and it strongly opposed the 2015 deal. It says it wants an improved deal that places tighter restrictions on Iran's nuclear program and addresses Iran's long-range missile program and its support for hostile proxies along Israel's borders. Israel also says that the negotiations must be accompanied by a "credible" military threat to ensure that Iran does not delay indefinitely. Negotiators from Britain, France and Germany said Tuesday they are not setting an "artificial" deadline for talks but stressed that "this negotiation is urgent." □

World's fair in Dubai warns of possible closures over virus

By ISABEL DEBRE

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The multibillion-dollar world's fair in Dubai has warned that some venues on site may shut down

as coronavirus cases rapidly rise in the United Arab Emirates.

Dubai's Expo 2020 said that virus outbreaks among staff may force some parts of the fair to "close temporar-

ily for deep cleaning and sanitization," without elaborating on the scope or the location of the infections. The UAE's daily virus caseload has skyrocketed by a multiple of 37 in just the last three weeks after the arrival of the omicron variant. The vague statement from Dubai's government-run media office on Monday underscores the daunting challenges of hosting among the world's first major in-person events amid a still-raging pandemic. The fair opened in October after a year's delay as the UAE bet that its rapid vaccine rollout would allow its economy to avoid the closures that have paralyzed much of the West. Expo tries to enforce various virus precautions, with

face masks mandatory on the fairgrounds and a vaccination certificate or recent negative virus test needed for entry. But the highly transmissible omicron variant, which is thought to evade immunity from vaccination, poses a new test. There have been no visible social distancing requirements at Expo's massive concerts in recent weeks where revelers have rammed up against each other, waving their hands to the music.

With Dubai's peak winter tourism season in full swing, the world's fair has vaulted into the spotlight. Millions of tourists from around the world are flocking to the sprawling site packed with scores of national pavilions, restaurants, shops and per-

formance stages. Christmas parades drew crowds last week and Expo is now gearing up for big concerts to attract party-goers on New Year's Eve.

New Year's Eve bashes last year in Dubai helped drive a drastic surge in virus cases in the Emirates as tourists escaped lockdowns at home.

Infections now hover below those heights but are climbing fast. The daily infection toll exceeded 1,840 on Tuesday, the highest in six months.

The more conservative capital of Abu Dhabi on Tuesday ramped up virus checks on the highway from Dubai to make sure all vaccinated drivers also had tested negative within the last two weeks. □



A man waves the national flag during celebrations for the UAE 50th National Day, at the EXPO 2020 Dubai, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Dec. 2, 2021.

Associated Press



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Russian court shuts renowned rights group

By DASHA LITVINNOVA

Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's highest court on Tuesday shut down one of the country's oldest and most prominent human rights organizations, the latest move in a relentless crackdown on rights activists, independent media and opposition supporters.

The Supreme Court's ruling to close Memorial, an international human rights group that drew international acclaim for its studies of political repression in the Soviet Union, sparked international outrage.

Memorial is made up of more than 50 smaller groups in Russia and abroad. It was declared a "foreign agent" in 2016 — a label that implies additional government scrutiny and carries strong pejorative connotations that can discredit the targeted organization. Prosecutors said the group repeatedly failed to identify itself as a foreign agent and tried to conceal the designation, the accusations rejected by Memorial.

During the hearing, prosecutors also charged that Memorial "creates a false image of the USSR as a terrorist state," a claim the group said revealed the authorities' real motive.

"The Supreme Court's ruling confirmed once again that the history of political terror organized and directed by the government isn't an academic issue that is interesting only for experts, but an acute problem of today," Memorial said in a statement. "Memorial embodies the Russian citizens' need to know the truth about the country's tragic path and the fate of millions. No one would be able to 'liquidate' that need."

The group said it would

appeal the verdict and pledged to continue its work.

"Of course, nothing is over with this," Maria Eismont, one of the lawyers that represented the group in court, said after the ruling. "We will appeal, and Memorial will live on with the people — because it's the people behind it serving this great cause first and foremost. The work will continue."

A crowd that gathered in front of the courthouse on Tuesday erupted into chants of "Disgrace!" in response to the ruling. Police detained several people who picketed the courthouse.

The Council of Europe's Secretary General, Marija Pejčinović Burić, described the move as "devastating news" and "a dark day for civil society in the Russian Federation."

Amnesty International called Memorial's closure "a blatant attack on civil society that seeks to blur the national memory of state repression" and "a grave insult to victims of the Russian Gulag."

U.S. Ambassador John Sullivan deplored the court's verdict as "a blatant and tragic attempt to suppress freedom of expression and erase history."

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian expressed "indignation and concern" at the shutdown of the NGO Memorial International, calling it "a terrible loss for the Russian people." "This announcement is deeply worrying about the future of historical research and the defense of human rights in Russia," he said in a statement.

Memorial's sister organization, the Memorial Human Rights Center, is up for closure as well, with a court

hearing Wednesday morning in Moscow City Court.

Russian authorities in recent months have ratcheted up pressure on rights groups, media outlets and individual journalists, naming dozens as foreign agents. Some were outlawed as "undesirable" and several were forced to shut down or disband themselves to prevent further prosecution.

On Saturday, authorities blocked the website of OVD-Info — a prominent legal aid group that focuses on political arrests — and urged social media platforms to take down its accounts after a court ruled that the website contained materials that "justify actions of extremist and terrorist groups."

The group rejected the charges as politically driven.

OVD-Info condemned the ruling to shut down Memorial.

"Memorial is an institution of national memory about the times of the Great Terror and Soviet repressions," the group said in a statement, adding that its closure amounted to an attempt to justify Soviet dictator Josef Stalin's repressions. "It is a clear signal both to society and to the elites: 'Yes, repressions were necessary and useful to the Soviet state in the past, and we need them today as well.'"

On Tuesday, five associates of imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny were taken into custody. Earlier this year, a Moscow court outlawed Navalny's organizations — the Foundation for Fighting Corruption and his country-wide network of regional offices — as extremist, exposing their staff members and supporters to prosecution.

One of the five detained



Police officers detain a demonstrator as people gather in front of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, in Moscow, Russia, Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2021.

Associated Press

activists, Ksenia Fadeyeva, is reportedly facing charges of forming an extremist group. Fadeyeva used to run Navalny's regional office in the Siberian city of Tomsk, and in last year's election won a seat in the city legislature. Another

Navalny associate, Lilia Chanyshova, was arrested and jailed in November on similar charges. She used to head Navalny's office in the Russian region of Bashkortostan and is facing up to 10 years in prison, if convicted. □



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Counting Down to the New Year Celebration in Aruba

ORANJESTAD - The holiday cheer in Aruba does not stop once Christmas celebrations come to an end, rather it is time for part two! Yes, New Year celebrations are up next! In Aruba, this means getting together with loved ones, setting off pagara and fireworks, indulging in good food, and toasting to the good life!

While this year's celebrations may look a bit different due to COVID-related safety measures, there is still much fun to be had! Start your evening off with a dinner surrounded by

your family and besties, and finish it off by gazing at the fireworks from your hotel balcony or the beach down below! If you are in Aruba for this fun time of year, or, if you plan to visit next holiday season, here is an overview of what to expect:

Pagara and Champagne toasts all day long

For those of you not familiar with Pagara, it is a long string of Chinese firecrackers. The Pagara is set off all around the island on New Year's Eve Day and marks the end of the year for lo-

cal businesses. Its main purpose is to celebrate success of the past year and to ward off any evil spirits that may come their way. By now it is not just done by businesses but also by families. It's tradition to gather with your friends, family, or coworkers, light the pagara, and have a Champagne toast (or three). This tradition kicks off the New Year celebration rather early in the day and can last until late afternoon. While this has been a long-time tradition on the island, it is certainly becoming more infrequent, and for



good reason! Many resorts and local companies are reverting to other New Year celebrations that are more environmentally friendly. Simply put, pagara can leave a big mess on the streets (and scare off animals and wildlife), and unless it's properly cleaned up this fun tradition becomes nothing but littering and a threat to the environment of our beautiful island.

New Year's Eve festivities

Once the pagara celebrations have come to an end it's time to freshen up and get ready for the main attraction, New Year's Eve of course!

Once the sun sets the fireworks shows begin! Fireworks are set off at all hours of the night throughout the island's neighborhoods. And at last, for the final hooray, just before midnight, certain resort areas begin their grand fireworks show. Find a high spot on the island to witness the spectacular panoramic island view of magic from above, or plop down on the beach and gaze up at the sky for a breathtaking show.

There are plenty of special

dinners held at restaurants and resorts. As just recently announced by the local Government, this year New Year's parties are canceled related to current COVID safety regulations. However, there is still plenty of opportunity to dine and enjoy the special evening. It is important to note this year all restaurants (that are not located on a resort property) have a closing time of 1 AM. New

Year's Day calls for brunch and beach!

After a night of celebrating there are two types of people, those that crawl right into bed to get some shut-eye and rest, and those that want to keep the party going. If you find yourself as the latter, then this clearly calls for a delicious and satisfying New Year's Day Brunch, followed by hitting the beach for some sun, dip in the sea, and fun (or a much-needed nap).

As you may have been able to tell, the holiday tradition here in Aruba is one of a kind, you really must try it for yourself. But please, do remember to celebrate responsibly and to always clean up after yourself! □

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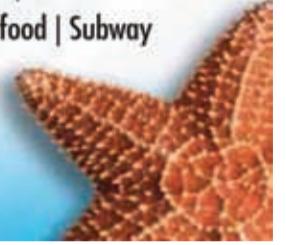
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Find a testing location near you at participating hotels for a convenient and professional testing experience. Are you not staying at a resort? Find other established testing center possibilities.

Request Domicile Service for easy testing for large groups staying at an Airbnb or Condominium. An additional charge of \$50 per group.

Scan QR-Code and find locations and opening hours at: www.covidaruba.com.

Note: It is required for guests to bring their passports to the appointment. The use of a face mask is mandatory.

Location list:

1. Noord Medical Center – For all outbound/ departing passengers
2. Urgent Care Aruba – For all outbound/ departing passengers
3. COVID Test Center Benu Oliva Superfood Plaza – For all outbound/ departing passengers
4. Medlab Shaba – For all outbound/ departing passengers
5. Medlab Centro Medico San Nicolaas – For all outbound/ departing passengers
6. Aruba Marriott Resort & Stellaris Casino – For guests staying at the resort
7. Marriott's Aruba Surf Club – For guests staying at the resort
8. Holiday Inn Resort Aruba – For guests staying at the resort
9. Playa Linda Beach Resort



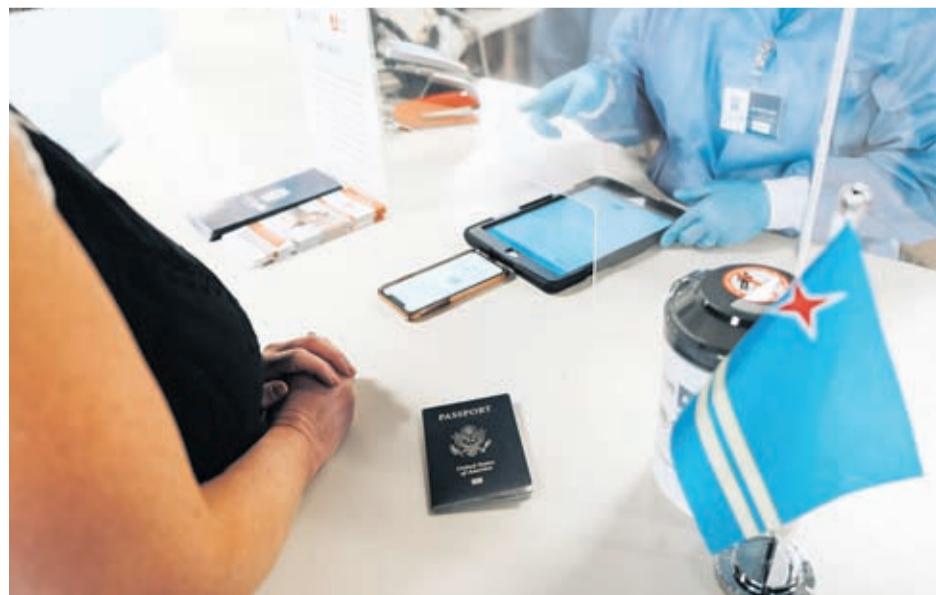
Urgent Care Aruba



Aruba – For guests staying at the resort

10. RIU Palace Aruba – For guests staying at the resort
11. Hotel RIU Palace Antillas – For guests staying at the resort
12. Eagle Aruba Resort & Casino – For guests staying at the resort
13. Costa Linda Beach Resort – For guests staying at the resort
14. Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort – For guests staying at the resort
15. Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa – For guests staying at the resort
16. Casa del Mar Beach Resort & Aruba Beach Club – For guests staying at the resort
17. Caribbean Palm Village Resort – For guests staying at the resort

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Elements Restaurant Present Aruba's only Authentic Aruban & Caribbean Buffet A feast of traditional Aruban and Caribbean flavors and ingredients overlooking one of the most spectacular beaches in the world

EAGLE BEACH — Elements Restaurant, located at Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, proudly reveals its Authentic Aruban & Caribbean Buffet, available every Monday through Saturday from 12:30 PM to 3:00 PM for \$24.50 per person. On Sundays the restaurant continues with its famous Sunday Brunch.

"We wanted to create an authentic Aruban menu that, with each bite, will take you back-in-time to your childhood home. We want you to relive the nostalgic flavors of the stews and desserts your parents and grandparents prepared. For our international customers, we want them to enjoy a traditional and culturally enrich dining experience." Ewald Biemans, owner/CEO of Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort, explains.

Executive Chef Marc Giesbers, Director of Food and Beverage, and his team of local & Caribbean chefs have been working hard and testing out different dishes to reimagine your lunch dining experience. The rotating menu has everything from local cornbread to polenta sticks, plantains, corn patties, Aruban ceviche, seafood salad, sulz, pickled pork, blood sausage, cucumber or papaya stoba, beef or chicken stews, fish or chicken soup, jerk chicken, Caribbean seafood paella, a pasta station, and a dessert tasting of flan, cashew cake, local fruit cake, and much more! "Our team is incredibly diverse, and our buffet assortment highlights this. Besides our traditional local dishes made by our Aruban chefs and cooks, we also offer various Caribbean dishes created by our Jamaican, Dominican, Haitian, Colombian, and Venezuelan chefs and cooks. Each chef or cook concentrates on making an authentic dish from their region, highlighting the delightful palettes they remember from infancy." Chef Marc explains. "It is also important to us to support our local farmers as much as possible. Our assortment rotates to include ingredients that are in season, and we source as much as we can locally or from nearby regions." The award-winning and adults-only beachfront restaurant will also continue to offer their regular a-la-carte menus, which cater to all dietary needs, including vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free diets.

Don't forget that the restaurant also offers its ultra romantic private dinners for two in one of their famous beach cabanas. Guests can enjoy their meal and a Caribbean cocktail or mocktail overlooking the spectacular Eagle Beach on Elements' outdoor seating deck. Reservations are recommended and be mindful that the restaurant does not seat groups larger than six persons and does not take cash (all major credit and debit cards are accepted).

For reservations, please visit www.elementsaruba.com or call +297 583 1100. □



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China pursues tech 'self-reliance,' fueling global unease

By JOE McDONALD

AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — To help make China a self-reliant "technology superpower," the ruling Communist Party is pushing the world's biggest e-commerce company to take on the tricky, expensive business of designing its own processor chips — a business unlike anything Alibaba Group has done before.

Its 3-year-old chip unit, T-Head, unveiled its third processor in October, the Yitian 710 for Alibaba's cloud computing business. Alibaba says for now, it has no plans to sell the chip to outsiders.

Other rookie chip developers including Tencent, a games and social media giant, and smartphone brand Xiaomi are pledging billions of dollars in line with official plans to create computing, clean energy and other technology that can build China's wealth and global influence.

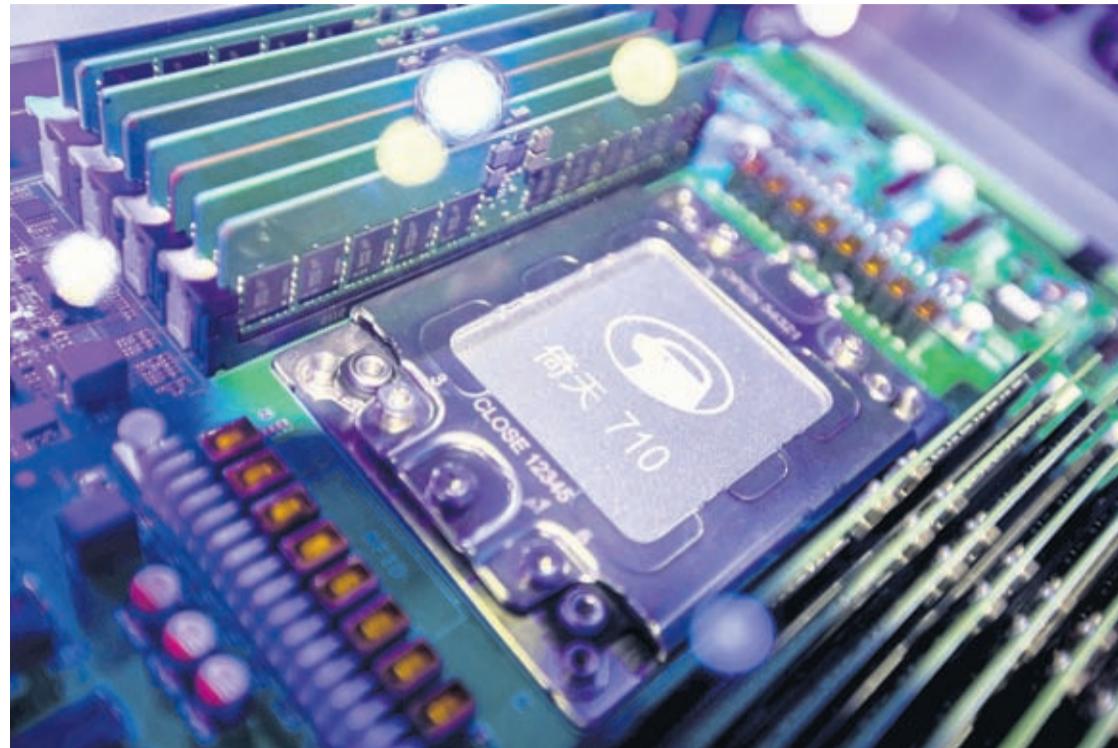
Processor chips play an increasingly critical role in products from smartphones and cars to medical devices and home appliances. Shortages due to the coronavirus pandemic are disrupting global manufacturing and adding to worries about supplies.

Chips are a top priority in the ruling Communist Party's marathon campaign to end China's reliance on technology from the United States, Japan and other suppliers Beijing sees as potential economic and strategic rivals. If it succeeds, business and political leaders warn that might slow down innovation, disrupt global trade and make the world poorer.

"Self-reliance is the foundation for the Chinese nation," President Xi Jinping said in a speech released in March. He called for China to become a "technology superpower" to safeguard "national economic security."

"We must strive to become the world's main center of science and the high ground of innovation," Xi said.

Beijing might be chasing



This photo shows a view of the ARM-structure server processor Yitian 710, developed by Alibaba's in-house semiconductor unit T-Head, at the Apsara Conference, an annual cloud service technology forum hosted by Alibaba Group, in Hangzhou in east China's Zhejiang province on Oct. 19, 2021.

Associated Press

a costly disappointment. Even with huge official investments, businesspeople and analysts say chipmakers and other companies will struggle to compete if they detach from global suppliers of advanced components and technology — a goal no other country is pursuing.

"It's hard to imagine any one country rebuilding all of that and having the best technology," said Peter Hanbury, who follows the industry for Bain & Co.

Beijing's campaign is adding to tension with Washington and Europe, which see China as a strategic competitor and complain it steals technology. They limit access to tools needed to improve its industries.

If the world were to decouple, or split into markets with incompatible standards and products, U.S.- or European-made parts might not work in Chinese computers or cars. Smartphone makers who have a single dominant global operating system and two network standards might need to make unique versions for different markets. That could slow down development.

Washington and Beijing need to "avoid that the world becomes separated," U.N. Secretary-General

Antonio Guterres told The Associated Press in September.

China's factories assemble the world's smartphones and tablet computers but need components from the United States, Europe, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. Chips are China's biggest import, ahead of crude oil, at more than \$300 billion last year. Official urgency over that grew after Huawei Technologies Ltd., China's first global tech brand, lost access to U.S. chips and other technology in 2018 under sanctions imposed by the White House.

That crippled the telecom equipment maker's ambition to be a leader in next-generation smartphones.

American officials say Huawei is a security risk and might aid Chinese spying, an accusation the company denies.

Huawei and some Chinese rivals are close to matching Intel Corp., Qualcomm Inc., South Korea's Samsung Electronics and Britain's Arm Ltd. at being able to design "bleeding edge" logic chips for smartphones, according to industry analysts.

But when it comes to making them, foundries such as state-owned SMIC in Shanghai are up to a decade behind industry lead-

ers including TSMC, or Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp., which produces chips for Apple Inc. and other global brands.

Even companies such as Alibaba that can design chips likely will need Taiwanese or other foreign foundries to make them. Alibaba's Yitian 710 requires precision no Chinese foundry can achieve. The company declined to say which foreign producer it will use.

"My country still faces a big gap in chip technology," said industry analyst Liu Chuntian of Zero Power Intelligence Group.

China accounts for 23% of global chip production capacity but only 7.6% of sales.

Packing millions of transistors onto a fingernail-size sliver of silicon requires some 1,500 steps, microscopic precision and arcane technologies owned by a handful of U.S., European, Japanese and other suppliers.

They include KLA Corp. in California for super-precise measurement and Japan's TEL for machines to apply coatings a few molecules thick.

Many are covered by restrictions on "dual use" technologies that can be used in weapons. □

China "lags significantly" in tools, materials and production technology, the Semiconductor Industry Association said in a report this year.

Washington and Europe, citing security worries, block access to the most advanced tools Chinese chipmakers need to match global leaders in precision and efficiency.

Without those, China is falling farther behind, said Bain's Hanbury.

"The TSMC horse is sprinting away and the Chinese horse is stopped," he said. "They can't move forward." Washington stepped up pressure on Huawei last year by barring global foundries from using American technology to produce its chips. U.S. vendors can sell chips to the company, but not for next-generation "5G" smartphones.

For its part, the European Union said it will review foreign investments after complaints China was eroding Europe's technology lead by purchasing important assets such as German robot maker Kuka.

Alibaba's Yitian 710 is based on architecture from Britain's Arm, highlighting China's enduring need for foreign know-how. Alibaba said it still will work closely with longtime foreign suppliers Intel, Arm, Nvidia Corp. and Advanced Micro Devices, Inc.

T-Head's first chip, the Hanguang 800, was announced in 2019 for artificial intelligence. Its second, the XuanTie 910, is for self-driving cars and other functions.

Beijing says it will spend \$150 billion from 2014 through 2030 to develop its chip industry, but even that is a fraction of what global leaders invest. TSMC plans to spend \$100 billion in the next three years on research and manufacturing. China is trying to buy experience by hiring engineers from TSMC and other Taiwanese producers. Taiwan, which Beijing claims as part of its territory and has threatened to attack, has responded by imposing curbs on job advertising. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 39 Labor

1 Mall group
business- 40 Blow
es away6 Rum-
soaked
cake 41 Stock
holders
42 Copier
need10 Jeweler's
unit11 Talked at
length

12 Heeds

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litter15 Allergy
sign16 Greek
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23 Mystique

26 Clutches

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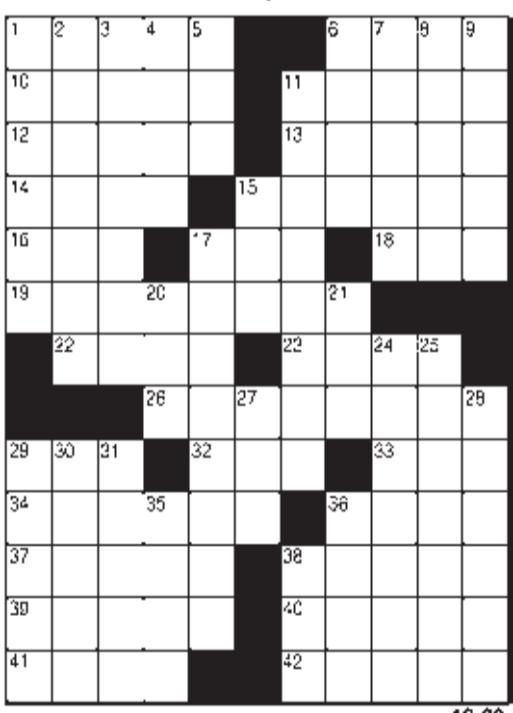
36 "Peter
Pan"
pooch

37 Off limits

38 Amy
healer

Yesterday's answer

1	Defendant	9	Building	27	Fruitcake
2	in a 1925	10	wing	28	bit
3	trial	11	Outlaw	29	Keyboard
4	Animal's	12	15 Hotel	30	bar
5	area	13	amenity	31	Crunch
6	Pizza herb	14	17 Scrape	32	kin
7	Forks	15	20 "Well,	33	Plain silly
8	over	16	that's	34	31 Woodland
9	5 Ave.	17	obvious!"	35	home
10	crossers	18	21 Sonar	36	Derisive
11	6 Hay	19	24 Month	37	calls
12	bundle	20	7 Pays to	38	Nautilus
13	play	21	of	39	captain
14	fasting	22	8 Hard stuff	40	Yoga
15	25 Worry	23	25	41	need



12-29

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-29

CRYPTOQUOTE

LG BT XGW LQJX OKJCX XGW

JBH'Q PGQQJ PKQ OKJCX JJC

QAJQ BL AGV B OWH SX

DBTK VBDL LSBQA

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: MY MOTHER LOVED CHILDREN, SHE WOULD HAVE GIVEN ANYTHING IF I HAD BEEN ONE. — GROUCHO MARX

Esports giant Riot settles discrimination case for \$100M

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Riot Games, the publisher behind esports giant "League of Legends," agreed Monday night to pay \$100 million to settle a class-action lawsuit alleging pay disparity, gender discrimination and sexual harassment.

The lawsuit was filed in November 2018 after gaming website Kotaku published a story detailing a sexist culture at Los Angeles-based Riot Games that included women being passed over for promotions, unwanted sexual advances and men questioning women about the legitimacy of their video game fandom. Other former employees later came forward with similar claims.

The California Department of Fair Employment said the suit will remedy violations against more than 1,000 female employees and 1,300 female contract workers. Riot has also agreed to improve conditions and provide a more equitable workplace for female em-



ployees and applicants.

"I am so glad we achieved this first step toward justice for the women of Riot Games," former employee and plaintiff Jes Negron said in a statement. "I hope this case serves as an example for other studios and an inspiration for women in the industry at large. Women in gaming do not have to suffer inequity and harassment in silence

change is possible."

"League of Legends" is the world's most popular esport, and Riot Games operates its 12 professional international leagues.

The publisher said in November the player base for games in the "League of Legends" universe had surpassed 180 million players per month.

The lawsuit filed in November 2018 alleged equal pay violations, gender discrimination, sexual harassment and retaliation toward female employees. □

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A magnifying glass is focused on a map of downtown Aruba, highlighting the location of the **TODAY** and **BONDIA** offices. The map shows various streets including Weststreet, Schelpstraat, Royal Plaza Mall, and L.G. Smith Boulevard. The **Downtown** area is also labeled.

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Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
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Denzel Washington on directing: 'I'm still learning'



This image released by Sony Pictures shows Chanté Adams, left, and Michael B. Jordan in a scene from Columbia Pictures' "A Journal for Jordan."

By JOCELYN NOVECK
AP National Writer

Preparing to direct "A Journal for Jordan," a bitter-sweet love story opening on Christmas Day, Denzel Washington says he took a "master class."

That master class consisted of starring in a movie directed by Joel Coen, "The Tragedy of Macbeth," which opens the same day. "I steal from the best," Washington says with a smile. Denzel Washington the actor has some 60 films under his belt, plus two Oscars, and at 66 is universally regarded as one of the all-time greats. Denzel Washington the director has just completed his fourth feature. "I don't call myself a director," he said matter-of-factly in an interview last week. "I'm still learning."

Before "A Journal for Jordan," based on the book by former New York Times editor Dana Canedy about her fiance, who fought and died in Iraq, and the journal of life lessons he left their baby son, Washington's most recent directorial effort was "Fences." The 2016 film version of the August

Wilson play starred Washington himself and Viola Davis, who won an Oscar. Washington directed himself in his other two feature outings as well — "The Great Debaters" in 2007 and "Antwone Fisher" in 2002. But he says he'd rather stay offscreen when he's at the helm.

"I prefer not being in the films," he said. "Early on, it had to do with me being able to raise the money to get the films made. Then 'Fences,' obviously we had great success on-stage, so that translated to film. But I enjoy being a more behind-the-scenes kind of guy." Aside from his recent collaboration with Coen, whom he calls "one of the greatest directors," Washington says he sought insight from some other directors he admires.

"I spent a great day with Paul Thomas Anderson a month or so ago, to listen to how he works," he said. "And Steve McQueen, I've been talking with a little bit. I'm learning how to do it, so I'm interested in learning from the best. So, I've been talking to the best."

Michael B. Jordan says he, too, is interested in learning from the best — which is why it was so impactful for him to be directed by Washington. The actor gives a charismatic performance as Canedy's fiance, 1st Sgt. Charles Monroe King, who was killed in Iraq in 2006 at age 48. (Canedy is portrayed by Chanté Adams.)

"To be able to work so closely with him was really important," Jordan said in an interview. "It was a master class, honestly."

"As an actor, you know, growing up, watching all his movies, watching his performances and being curious about his process — like, 'Man, I wonder how the greatest of all time rehearses' or how he breaks down his character,'" Jordan mused. "His perspective of character is so layered. You really realize, 'Oh, THIS is why you're Denzel, got it! I've been doing great, but then this is the next level!'"

And Jordan said working with Washington was especially important given that he's about to embark on

his own directorial debut, directing — and starring in — the upcoming "Creed III."

"Knowing that I was directing 'Creed III' next, he made it a point to take me to the side a lot, you know? I was always kind of in his back pocket, watching and asking questions and (him) giving me little gems," Jordan said.

The actor told the story of how Washington asked him one day whether he had a storyboard artist lined up — he hadn't, and wasn't planning to for several months — and within moments, Washington was making introductions.

"He was like, 'No, no, get one now,'" Jordan said. "He picked up his phone and he called this guy, Warren Drummond. And he was like, 'Warren, it's D. I got Mike B. here, and he's getting ready to direct 'Creed III.''" Washington put Jordan on the phone, and soon a deal was made.

"So it's from something as generous as that to, he was always giving me advice for what to look for because there's another layer to it —

there's not a lot of people who have directed themselves," Jordan said. "And that's what's really challenging for me on this one." Washington, Jordan says, told him that he needed to "identify the few opinions that you're really going to anchor your choices on, because you're not going to have time to run back to the monitors every take and see what you got." Washington said the original plan was not for him to direct; he became involved with the project through longtime producing partner Todd Black 12 years ago, shortly after Canedy wrote her story. It took eight years to develop a script. When Washington saw the screenplay, penned by Virgil Williams, he said "Shoot, I'd direct this!" He says he was drawn by the beauty of the love story — sad, but uplifting.

Jordan, who also was attached to the project for several years before the movie got made, says he found a lot to identify with in a father journaling for his infant son.

"I journal a lot, and I think about legacy all the time," Jordan says. "And one day having a family. And I think about my time on this Earth, and what do I do with it?" But another key reason he stuck with the film, as it developed and his own dance card filled up rapidly in Hollywood, was Washington. "Denzel directing was a dream come true," he says. Washington says mentorship was important to him as well — beginning with an English and theater teacher at Fordham University, Robinson Stone, "one of my first mentors who could see the potential I had." "And just over the years, I've been blessed to work with some of the greatest filmmakers ever, so I steal from the best," he said. "Trying to learn from the best, from Spike (Lee) to Tony Scott, Ridley Scott, Norman Jewison, Richard Attenborough, Jonathan Demme. I take a little from all of them, and try to apply it to what I'm learning how to do." □

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U.S. names Quinn coach, Vanbiesbrouck GM for no-NHL Olympics

By STEPHEN WHYNO
AP Hockey Writer

David Quinn was supposed to be an assistant on Mike Sullivan's coaching staff for the U.S. men's hockey team at the upcoming Winter Olympics.

After the NHL decided not to send players to Beijing, Quinn is now in charge as U.S. coach and John Vanbiesbrouck is the latest general manager in USA Hockey's first shift to plan B for another Olympics without the best hockey players in the world.

"To be named the head coach under these circumstances, it's bittersweet in some ways," Quinn said on a video call Monday. "We all were hoping that the NHL guys were going to go, but to be named the head coach for the 2022 Olympic team is an incredible honor."

Quinn, 55, was the only member of the initial coaching staff not cur-

rently working in the NHL. He coached the New York Rangers the past three seasons after five years at Boston University.

Internationally, Quinn most recently coached for the U.S. as an assistant at the 2016 world championships and was also on staff for that tournament in 2007 and 2012.

"All those opportunities for me have prepared me for this," Quinn said.

Instead of a U.S. roster featuring the likes of Auston Matthews, Patrick Kane and Seth Jones, Vanbiesbrouck will be tasked with drawing from the college ranks and European professional leagues, similar to 2018.

"He certainly has the greatest handle on the overall player pool of American players," USA Hockey executive director Pat Kelleher said of Vanbiesbrouck. "He's been involved with the NHL and our NHL peo-

ple involved for the 2022 Olympic team, so no one better to serve as the GM of our team than John Vanbiesbrouck, who can take what we've been doing so far to move forward."

Vanbiesbrouck is the third person to take over Olympic roster preparations after Minnesota Wild GM Bill Guerin replaced Stan Bowman, who resigned after an investigation found he had a prominent role in the Chicago Blackhawks mishandling sexual assault allegations in 2010. Guerin stepped aside when the NHL pulled out.

"This turn of events, we have to get to work and we have to get to work quickly selecting our team," Vanbiesbrouck said.

Vanbiesbrouck has served as USA Hockey's assistant executive director of hockey operations for the past three and a half years. A U.S. Hockey Hall of Famer who played 953 NHL games



New York Rangers coach David Quinn gestures from the bench during the third period of the team's NHL hockey game against the Boston Bruins in Boston on Jan. 19, 2019.

Associated Press

as a goaltender from 1981-2002, Vanbiesbrouck resigned as GM and coach of a junior hockey team in 2003 after using a racial slur to describe defenseman Trevor Daley, who is Black. Upon hiring Vanbiesbrouck in 2018, Kelleher said the organization looked into that incident and said, "He

looks at it as a terrible situation, an awful mistake — something that's helped change him for the better." Vanbiesbrouck at the time apologized, adding: "It's not who I am. It doesn't define me as a person and I have no prejudices in me, and it will never happen again." □

One of a kind: Ohtani wins AP Male Athlete of Year award

By GREG BEACHAM

AP Sports Writer

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Most of the time in professional sports, it's easy to think it's all been done before.

With so many finetuned athletes constantly pushing each other to the peak of human potential, we can experience unprecedented demonstrations of sporting brilliance every week of our lives. But it's truly rare to witness anything that isn't fundamentally just a better, more prolific version of something we've already seen.

That's why Shohei Ohtani's astonishing redefinition of modern baseball captured the world's attention so vividly in 2021 — and that's why the Los Angeles Angels' two-way superstar is the winner of The Associated Press' Male Athlete of the Year award.

The unanimous American League MVP put together a season with no analogue in the past century of his sport. Almost no one had been an everyday two-way player for many decades — and nobody has been both one of baseball's top power hitters and one of its best starting pitchers since Babe Ruth starred at the plate and on the mound for the Boston Red Sox in 1919.

"He's doing something we haven't seen in our lifetimes, but he's also doing it at the very highest level of hitting and pitching," Angels manager Joe Maddon said late in the regular season. "He's doing more



Los Angeles Angels' Shohei Ohtani is greeted in the dugout after he hit a solo home run during the first inning of a baseball game against the Seattle Mariners, Sunday, Oct. 3, 2021, in Seattle.

Associated Press

than other players, but he's also doing it better than almost everybody else on that field, and those are the greatest players in the game, his contemporaries. He's playing their game, but he's also playing a different game."

Ohtani hit 46 homers and drove in 100 runs with a .965 OPS while playing in 126 games as the AL's best designated hitter, as evidenced by his Silver Slugger award. He finished third in the majors in homers after leading the sport for much of the season.

Ohtani also started 23 games on the mound, going 9-2 with a 3.18 ERA and 156 strikeouts over 130 1/3

innings as the Angels' ace and one of the AL's top right-handers. He has a 100-

mph fastball, but his splitter might be the best pitch in baseball, with movement that resembles a ball rolling off the edge of a table. The 6-foot-4 specimen also was among the fastest baserunners in the majors while stealing 26 bases and scoring 103 runs. He even led the league with eight triples — and he also played a little outfield when asked.

Any one of these achievements would be impressive for a 27-year-old hitting his prime in his fourth season since moving from Japan to the major leagues.

Doing it all at the same time is something that almost nobody who's currently alive had ever seen.

Ohtani kept baseball's historians and statheads

metaphorically buried up

to their eyes in dusty record books all summer as they dug into the early 20th century annals to identify the last players to accomplish the statistical superlatives Ohtani was currently blazing past.

Mike Trout, Ohtani's three-time AL MVP teammate, called Ohtani's season "nothing short of electric." "At times, I felt like I was back in Little League," Trout added. "To watch a player throw eight innings, hit a home run, steal a base and then go play right field was incredible."

Fans across the world agreed: Despite his soft-spoken personality and single-minded focus on his sport, Ohtani has become an icon wherever baseball is played and a known

figure even beyond the game's traditional borders.

"I've never seen fans get to ballparks so early and stay to the end," Red Sox manager Alex Cora said in July. "That's what he's bringing to the equation. I love it. Seems like every pitch when he's at the plate, you can hear the oohs and aahs. I think it's great for baseball."

Ohtani's success not only commanded fans' attention on both sides of the Pacific, but also reignited a debate long considered finished about the merits of sports specialization in a country where young athletes are often encouraged to stop competing in multiple disciplines even before they reach their teens. Nobody currently has Ohtani's overall talents, but big-league teams are increasingly open to the possibility of two-way contributors across their organizations.

Ohtani lives a quiet life in both Anaheim and Japan, but he is unfailingly gracious when lauded for his unique achievements. Sometimes he seems just as surprised by his multifaceted success as the rest of the world, while at other times he expresses the quiet confidence necessary to do such a thing in the first place.

"I'm a student of the game, so I do feel like I need to grow every year, and I think I've been able to do that," Ohtani said through his interpreter and constant companion, Ippei Mizuhara. □

Holiday Bowl scrapped as virus issues hit UCLA before kick

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The Holiday Bowl became the fifth postseason college football game to be canceled when UCLA was forced to pull out just hours before Tuesday's kickoff because of COVID-19 issues with the team.

The Bruins were scheduled to face No. 18 North Carolina State at Petco Park, the home of the San Diego Pa-

nders. A surge in COVID-19 cases across the country has disrupted a second straight bowl season. The Hawaii, Military, Fenway and Arizona bowls have already been canceled due to virus outbreaks leaving teams without enough available players. The Sun and Gator bowls have had to scramble to find replacement

teams for their games. North Carolina State is the fifth Atlantic Coast Conference team to have its bowl disrupted by the virus. Miami, Virginia and Boston College all had to withdraw from their games. Wake Forest is set to play in the Gator Bowl, but will face Rutgers instead of Texas A&M as originally scheduled. □



UCLA quarterback Dorian Thompson-Robinson pulls back to throw a pass during the first half of an NCAA college football game against California on Nov. 27, 2021, in Pasadena, Calif.

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